

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend claims 5, 8 and 9. Please cancel claims 1-4, 6-7 and 11. This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Cancelled) An apparatus comprising:

a leaf spring retaining bracket having an upper section with a curved shape, first and second downwardly extending walls adjoining the upper section, each downwardly extending wall terminating at a pair of intersecting edges.

2. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the upper section forms an arc of between about 90 degrees and about 180 degrees.

3. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising a cross bolt extending between the first and second downwardly extending walls.

4. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the leaf spring retaining bracket is symmetrical about two planes.

5. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:

a leaf spring retaining bracket having an upper section with a curved shape, first and second downwardly extending walls adjoining the upper section, each downwardly extending wall terminating at a pair of intersecting edges; and

~~The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising~~ an outwardly flared area near the intersection of each pair of intersecting edges.

6. (Cancelled) An apparatus comprising:

a leaf spring having a first end with an eye;
a retaining bracket with an arced upper section defining a weldable area of between about five square inches and about forty square inches, first and second downwardly extending generally parallel walls adjoining the arced upper section, each wall terminating at a pair of intersecting edges; and

a cross-bolt extending through the eye in the first end of the leaf spring and

between the first and second downwardly extending walls.

7. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the retaining bracket is symmetrical along a first plane and a second plane.

8. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:

a leaf spring having a first end with an eye;

a retaining bracket with an arced upper section defining a weldable area of between about five square inches and about forty square inches, first and second downwardly extending generally parallel walls adjoining the arced upper section, each wall terminating at a pair of intersecting edges;

a cross-bolt extending through the eye in the first end of the leaf spring and between the first and second downwardly extending walls; and

~~The apparatus of claim 6 further comprising~~ a flared area between the pair of intersecting edges.

9. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:

a leaf spring having a first end with an eye;

a retaining bracket with an arced upper section defining a weldable area of between about five square inches and about forty square inches, first and second downwardly extending generally parallel walls adjoining the arced upper section, each wall terminating at a pair of intersecting edges;

a cross-bolt extending through the eye in the first end of the leaf spring and between the first and second downwardly extending walls; and

~~The apparatus of claim 6 further comprising~~ a longitudinal member of a vehicle frame, at least a portion of the longitudinal member having a lower surface with an arced shape corresponding to the arced upper section.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 9 wherein the upper section of the retaining bracket is welded to the longitudinal member.

11. (Cancelled) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the arced upper section defines an arc of between about 90 degrees and about 180 degrees.

12. (Original) An apparatus comprising:

a leaf spring having a first end and a second end, the first end having an eye;
a longitudinal member of a vehicle frame having a lower surface with an arced portion;

a one-piece leaf spring retaining bracket retaining the first end of the leaf spring to the longitudinal member, the bracket having an upper section with an arced shape welded to the arced portion of the lower surface of the longitudinal member, and first and second walls extending downwardly from the upper section; and

a cross bolt extending between the walls and through the eye of the first end of the leaf spring.

13. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the first and second walls are generally parallel.

14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the arced upper section defines an arc of between about 90 degrees and about 180 degrees.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the one-piece leaf spring retaining bracket and the longitudinal member are formed of sheet steel, the thickness of the sheet steel of the one-piece leaf spring retaining bracket being less than twice the thickness of the sheet steel of the longitudinal member.

16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 further comprising a pair of longitudinal members, a first longitudinal member on the left side of the vehicle frame and a second longitudinal member on the right side of the vehicle frame, the one-piece leaf spring retaining bracket being weldable to the first or the second longitudinal member to retain a leaf spring to either the first or the second longitudinal member.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the first and second walls are generally parallel and terminate at edges, each edge having an outwardly flared area.

18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein each of the first and second walls terminates at a pair of intersecting edges.

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 wherein the bracket is symmetrical with respect to a first plane and a second plane.

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 12 further comprising holes in the first and the second walls, the cross bolt extending through the holes.